

Message Text

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ACTION SY-05

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 ARA-06 /012 W
-----281525Z 112288 /50
R 252030Z MAR 77
FM AMEMBASSY KINGSTON
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 4559
INFO AMEMBASSY PANAMA

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 1 OF 2 KINGSTON 1431

DEPT FOR SY, ARA/CAR, ARA/MGT: PANAMA FOR RSS

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: ASEC, JM
SUBJECT: AMEMBASSY KINGSTON SECURITY ASSESSMENT
REFERENCE: 75 KINGSTON 3789

1. SUMMARY AND INTRODUCTION. THE REFERENCED TELEGRAM PROVIDED A COMPREHENSIVE ASSESSMENT OF VARIOUS SECURITY THREATS EXISTING VIS-A-VIS OUR MISSION AND STAFF AS OF SEPTEMBER 1975. IN THE INTERVENING PERIOD THE EMBASSY SECURITY WATCH COMMITTEE HAS PERIODICALLY REASSESSED AND ACTED UPON EXISTING THREATS. WE NOW BELIEVE IT USEFUL TO PROVIDE TO THE DEPARTMENT A FURTHER BROAD ASSESSMENT USING THE REFTEL AS A BASE. THIS MESSAGE THEREFORE SHOULD BE READ IN CONJUNCTION WITH REFTEL.

2. PRIMARY THREATS REMAIN ESSENTIALLY AS REPORTED REFTEL, I.E. (A) POLITICAL TERRORISM BY GROUPS OR INDIVIDUALS WHO OPERATE INTERNATIONALLY; (B) A POSSIBILITY CONTINUING DOMESTIC POLITICAL VIOLENCE MIGHT AT SOME POINT BE DIRECTED AT THE MISSION OR U.S. OFFICIALS HERE; AND (C) NON-POLITICAL CRIME. THE LATTER THREAT IS BY FAR THE MOST SERIOUS. INCIDENTS INVOLVING AMERICAN STAFF AND DEPENDENTS CONTINUE DESPITE THE STATE OF EMERGENCY DECLARED BY THE GOJ IN JUNE, 1976. THE OUTLOOK IS FOR AN INCREASE IN NON-POLITICAL CRIME AS A CONSEQUENCE OF JAMAICA'S CURRENT POLITICAL AND ECONOMIC PROBLEMS.
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THE TRANSFER OF THE MISSION'S CHANCERY TO A NEW LOCATION IN A FEW WEEKS WILL REDUCE THE RATE OF SOME FORMS OF STREET AND SIDEWALK CRIME PRESENTLY AFFECTING MOST STAFF. HOWEVER, U.S. AND LOCAL STAFF (ONE-THIRD OF MISSION TOTAL) AT OUR VISA ANNEX WILL REMAIN EXPOSED IN A HIGH CRIME AREA UNTIL A NEW ANNEX CAN BE ACQUIRED. WE DO NOT BELIEVE THE SITUATION

PRESENTLY REQUIRES ANY OTHER MAJOR NEW SECURITY PRECAUTIONS. END SUMMARY AND INTRODUCTION.

3. BACKGROUND. ALTHOUGH THE CHARACTER OF EXISTING THREATS TO THIS MISSION AND ITS STAFF HAS NOT CHANGED DRAMATICALLY SINCE 1975, EIGHT MONTHS EXPERIENCE WITH JAMAICA'S STATE OF EMERGENCY (NOW EXTENDED TO THIS COMING JUNE), JAMAICA'S MOVEMENT TO THE LEFT, ITS CURRENT ECONOMIC CRISIS, AND A BRITISH AND CANADIAN ASSUMPTION OF SHARP INCREASE IN THE VIOLENT CRIME THREAT, ALL SUGGEST IT WOULD BE APPROPRIATE TO SUBMIT TO THE DEPARTMENT A NEW BASIC ASSESSMENT OF SECURITY THREATS AS DETERMINED BY THE EMBASSY'S SECURITY WATCH COMMITTEE. A FURTHER CONSIDERATION IS THE FORTHCOMING MOVE OF THE MAIN CHANCERY TO A MORE SECURE LOCATION.

4. INTERNATIONAL POLITICAL TERRORISM. THIS THREAT REMAINS ESSENTIALLY AS REPORTED REFTEL. ALTHOUGH LAST YEAR'S BOMBING OF THE AIR CUBANA FLIGHT OFF BARBADOS HAS RESULTED IN IMPROVED SECURITY MEASURES AT JAMAICA'S INTERNATIONAL AIRPORTS, THOSE MEASURES ARE DIRECTED MAINLY AT PROTECTING OUTBOUND FLIGHTS. INCOMING ENTRY CONTROLS HAVE BEEN IMPROVED SOMEWHAT BUT REMAIN INADEQUATE. DETERMINED INTERNATIONAL TERRORISTS COULD ENTER JAMAICA AND WOULD HAVE LITTLE DIFFICULTY WERE THEY TO ATTACK ANY OF OUR OFFICES OR RESIDENCES. JAMAICA'S SECURITY FORCES HAVE NEITHER THE EQUIPMENT, TRAINING, NOR THE EXPERIENCE TO DEAL WITH THIS KIND OF THREAT.

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5. DOMESTIC POLITICAL VIOLENCE AND TERRORISM. REFTEL REPORTED THAT A SHARP DETERIORATION IN US/JAMAICAN RELATIONS COULD EASILY TRIGGER AN ATTACK ON OUR OFFICES OR STAFF BY DEMONSTRATORS, OR BY ANY OF THE ARMED POLITICAL GANGS WHICH EXIST IN THIS COUNTRY -- AND WHICH ARE IN THE HABIT OF TAKING VIOLENT ACTION FOR POLITICAL PURPOSES. THIS THREAT BECAME REALITY IN JANUARY, 1976 WHEN THE VISA ANNEX OF THIS MISSION WAS ATTACKED BY A MOB AT MID-DAY. THAT EVENING TWO JAMAICAN CONSTABLES ASSIGNED TO GUARD THE ANNEX IN THE AFTERMATH OF THE ATTACK WERE SHOT TO DEATH BY UNKNOWN ASSAILANTS. CONSIDERABLE CONCERN THAT THE THREAT WOULD AGAIN BECOME REALITY AROSE IN SEPTEMBER AND OCTOBER AS A CONSEQUENCE OF PHILIP AGEE'S VISIT TO JAMAICA AND HIS ALLEGATIONS CONCERNING CIA ACTIVITIES IN JAMAICA. HARASSMENT INCIDENTS OCCURRED, BUT THERE WERE NO SERIOUS INCIDENTS.

6. AT THE MOMENT THE JAMAICAN GOVERNMENT IS ATTEMPTING TO HOLD DOWN THE LEVEL OF ANTI-US RHETORIC IN AN EFFORT TO IMPROVE RELATIONSHIPS WITH THE U.S. THE POTENTIAL FOR POLITICALLY-INSPIRED VIOLENCE AGAINST THE MISSION AND STAFF THUS IS LOW FOR THE MOMENT. HOWEVER, ANY FAILURE IN THE EFFORT TO IMPROVE RELATIONSHIPS WITH THE U.S. MAY RESULT IN RENEWED ANTI-US RHETORIC AND ACTION. SHOULD THAT OCCUR, THE LIKELIHOOD OF POLITICALLY-MOTIVATED VIOLENCE DIRECTED AGAINST OUR MISSION AND STAFF WOULD INCREASE.

7. THE CANADIAN AND BRITISH HIGH COMMISSIONS BELIEVE THERE IS ALSO A POSSIBILITY THAT PRO-CUBAN LEFTISTS WITHIN THE GOVERNMENT AND THE PEOPLE'S NATIONAL PARTY (GOVERNING PARTY) MAY SEEK TO SABOTAGE MOVEMENT TO IMPROVED US/JAMAICAN RELATIONSHIPS THROUGH VIOLENT ATTACKS ON THE MISSION OR ITS STAFF. THIS THREAT IS CONFIDENTIAL

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ASSESSED AS BEING VERY LOW AT THIS TIME.

8. NON-POLITICAL CRIME. THIS WAS THE MOST PROMINENT EXISTING THREAT AT THE TIME REFTEL WAS PREPARED, AND REMAINS THE SINGLE MOST SIGNIFICANT THREAT TO THE MISSION STAFF AND THEIR DEPENDENTS. THE HIGH LEVEL OF CRIME, OFTEN VIOLENT, WHICH HAS EXISTED IN KINGSTON FOR SEVERAL YEARS PEAKED IN MID-1976 WITH THE RESULTANT IMPOSITION OF A STATE OF EMERGENCY (A MODIFIED FORM OF MATIAL LAW) WHICH REMAINS IN EFFECT TODAY. THE SITUATION IS CHARACTERIZED BY WIDESPREAD CRIMINAL AND POLITICAL VIOLENCE (INCLUDING GANG WARFARE) CONCENTRATED IN WEST AND CENTRAL KINGSTON. WHILE ALL

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ACTION SY-05

INFO OCT-01 ARA-06 ISO-00 /012 W
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R 252030Z MAR 77
FM AMEMBASSY KINGSTON

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 4560
INFO AMEMBASSY PANAMA

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 2 OF 2 KINGSTON 1431

DEPT FOR SY, ARA/CAR, ARA/MGT; PANAMA FOR RSS

AMERICAN STAFF AVOID THESE AREAS OF CONCENTRATION, CRIMINALS ALSO OPERATE THROUGHOUT THE REST OF KINGSTON. ALL STAFF AND DEPENDENTS THUS ARE VULNERABLE TO CRIME, E.G. MUGGINGS, PURSE SNATCHINGS, BURGLARIES, AMBUSHES OF CARS, PHYSICAL ASSAULTS, ETC. THE ACTUAL INCIDENT RATE HAS BEEN HELD DOWN THROUGH A RANGE OF PRECAUTIONARY MEASURES WHICH INCLUDE THOROUGH BRIEFINGS OF ALL NEW ARRIVALS. WHILE THERE HAVE BEEN SOME VERY CLOSE CALLS, NO STAFF AND NO DEPENDENTS HAVE BEEN INJURED SINCE PREPARATION OF THE LAST ASSESSMENT (REFTEL). ALTHOUGH THE STATE OF EMERGENCY MAY HAVE HAD A DAMPENING EFFECT ON SOME TYPES OF CRIME SINCE MID-1976, THE RATE OF REPORTED SERIOUS INCIDENTS (EXCLUDING HARASSMENT) INVOLVING AMERICAN STAFF AND DEPENDENTS HAS NOT CHANGED SIGNIFICANTLY. THERE WERE 24 SUCH INCIDENTS IN 1975, 19 IN 1976, AND 6 IN FIRST TWO MONTHS OF 1977.

9. LOOKING TO THE FUTURE, THIS EMBASSY, LIKE THE CANADIAN AND BRITISH HIGH COMMISSIONS, BELIEVES A SOARING UNEMPLOYMENT RATE (EXPECTED TO SURPASS 30 PERCENT THIS YEAR), PERIODIC FOOD SHORTAGES, AND OTHER SOCIO/ECONOMIC ILLS SUGGEST AN INCREASE IN CRIME-- ESPECIALLY MUGGINGS, PURSE SNATCHINGS AND BURGLARIES. IT IS ALSO POSSIBLE UNEMPLOYMENT AND FOOD SHORTAGES
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WILL BECOME SERIOUS ENOUGH TO RESULT IN RIOTS, INCLUDING MOB ATTACKS ON SHOPPING CENTERS AND SUPERMARKETS FREQUENTED BY OUR STAFF. THE RISING RHETORIC OF RACE AND CLASS POLITICS WILL EXACERBATE THE SITUATION.

10. HAVING SAID ALL OF THE FOREGOING, WE DO NOT NOW FORESEE THAT THE UNFOLDING SITUATION WILL BECOME SERIOUS ENOUGH TO WARRANT REDUCTIONS IN STAFF, OR MAJOR NEW SECURITY MEASURES, WITH ONE EXCEPTION DISCUSSED BELOW. OUR STAFF AND THEIR DEPENDENTS WILL HAVE TO BE MORE WATCHFUL AND CAREFUL ABOUT THEIR MOVEMENTS.

11. SECURITY MEASURES. DURING THE PAST YEAR THIS MISSION, WITH THE DEPARTMENT'S ASANCE, HAS ADOPTED A WIDE RANGE OF SECURITY MEASURES TO COPE WITH THE

SITUATION. THE MOST IMPORTANT OF THESE INCLUDE: (A) ADDITIONAL MSGCOVERAGE OF MISSION OFFICES, (B) THE STATIONING OF ARMED CONTRACT GUARDS ON A 24-HOUR BASIS AT THE AMBASSADOR'S AND DCM'S RESIDENCES, AND AT DETACHED HOUSES OF OTHER STAFF WHEN THE EMPLOYEE IS AWAY ON OFFICIAL BUSINESS OR LEAVE, (C) EXPANSION OF THE MISSION'S INTERNAL RADIO NETWORK, (D) ADOPTION OF A HOUSING POLICY WHICH PLACES MOST STAFF IN APARTMENTS AND TOWNHOUSES RATHER THAN DETACHED HOUSES,(E) EXPANSION OF THE EMBASSY'S INVENTORY OF PROTECTIVE WEAPONS AND DEVICES AND, (F) PERHAPS MOST IMPORTANTLY, LEASING OF A NEW CHANCERY WHICH WILL HOUSE ALL MISSION ELEMENTS--EXCEPT THE VISA ANNEX AND PEACE CORPS STAFF. BEYOND THE ABOVE MEASURES, THE RSO IS COMPLETING ARRANGEMENTS FOR A CONTRACT BODYGUARD SERVICE FOR THE AMBASSADOR.

12. THE GREATEST SECURITY PROBLEM FACED BY THIS MISSION HAS BEEN THE LOCATION OF THE MAIN CHANCERY IN
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A HIGH-CRIME AREA WHERE STREET CRIME IS A DAILY OCCURRENCE. ON PRESENT PLANNING THE MOVE TO THE NEW CHANCERY WILL BE COMPLETED IN EARLY APRIL. THE NEW CHANCERY OCCUPIES THE THIRD, FOURTH AND FIFTH FLOORS IN A NEW ELEVEN -FLOOR OFFICES BUILDING IN ONE OF THE BETTER AREAS OF KINGSTON. THE PARKING AREA IS RELATIVELY SECURE. THIS MOVE ALONE SHOULD SHARPLY REDUCE THE NUMBER OF STREET INCIDENTS INVOLVING LOCAL AND AMERICAN STAFF SERVING IN THE CHANCERY WHILE ALSO REDUCING SIGNIFICANTLY THE RIOT AND TERRORIST THREAT TO THAT OFFICE.

13. THE PHYSICALLY VULNERABLE VISA ANNEX DOES, HOWEVER, STILL HOUSE ONE-THIRD OF OUR TOTAL STAFF AND REMAINS IN A CRIME-RIDDEN AREA WHERE STAFF ARE EXPOSED TO HARASSMENT OR ATTACK WITHIN AND WITHOUT THE OFFICE. WE ARE PRESENTLY SEEKING, WITH THE DEPARTMENT'S ENCOURAGEMENT, NEW PREMISES, BUT IT SEEMS LIKELY THAT THE VISA OPERATION WILL REMAIN WHERE IT IS UNTIL AT LEAST THE END OF THIS YEAR. THE ASSIGNMENT OF ONE MSG DURING DUTY HOURS TO THAT OFFICE (ANTICIPATED IN EARLY APRIL), PLUS A RECENT CHANGE IN POLICE COVERAGE WHICH PROVIDES FOR THE PRESENCE OF POLICE GUARDS FROM BEFORE DUTY HOURS AND UNTIL ABOUT 1800 HOURS REDUCES SOMEWHAT THE THREAT OF SERIOUS INCIDENTS AT THAT OFFICE. A FURTHER CONTRIBUTION TO STAFF SECURITY AT THE VISA ANNEX HAS BEEN THE RECENT ADDITION OF A NUMBER OF INTERNAL SECURITY DEVICES-- INCLUDING BANK TELLER TYPE WINDOWS FOR NIV OFFICERS.

BUT THE ONLY SATISFACTORY SOLUTION WILL BE REMOVAL OF THE OFFICE TO A MORE EFFICIENT AND SECURE BUILDING IN A BETTER PART OF KINGSTON AS SOON AS POSSIBLE.

14. A FACTOR WHICH APPARENTLY HAS CONTRIBUTED TO STAFF SECURITY HAS BEEN THE ABOVE-MENTIONED HOUSING POLICY. THERE HAVE BEEN NO REPORTED SIGNIFICANT CONFIDENTIAL

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INCIDENTS AT ANY OF OUR STAFF APARTMENTS OR TOWN-HOUSES SINCE AT LEAST JANUARY 1975. BY WAY OF CONTRAST, THERE WERE EIGHT INCIDENTS (E.G. BREAK-INS, ASSAULTS, SERIOUS HARASSMENT, ETC.) INVOLVING STAFF IN DETACHED HOUSES IN 1975, ELEVEN IN 1976, AND FIVE IN THE FIRST TWO MONTHS OF 1977. MOREOVER, WHILE THE NUMBER OF INCIDENTS INVOLVING DETACHED HOUSING HAS INCREASED, THE NUMBER OF STAFF LIVING IN SUCH UNITS HAS DECREASED IN THE PAST YEAR. IN DECEMBER 1976 THERE WERE 29 AMERICAN STAFF IN DETACHED HOUSES, AND 17 IN APARTMENTS OR TOWNHOUSES. THE RATIO IN MARCH 1977 WAS 21 AND 25.

15. CONCLUSION. ALTHOUGH IT WOULD APPEAR THAT THE NON-POLITICAL CRIME THREAT IS INCREASING AS A CONSEQUENCE OF JAMAICA'S CURRENT ECONOMIC AND POLITICAL PROBLEMS, THIS MISSION BELIEVES THAT EXISTING AND PLANNED MEASURES FOR THE SECURITY OF OUR STAFF AND OFFICES GENERALLY ARE AS ADEQUATE AS PRACTICABLE UNDER THE CIRCUMSTANCES. THE SITUATION WILL BE KEPT UNDER CAREFUL REVIEW--INCLUDING THROUGH CONSULTATIONS WITH OUR BRITISH AND CANADIAN COLLEAGUES. GERARD

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Message Attributes

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Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: n/a
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Decaption Note:
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Disposition Approved on Date:
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Disposition Date: 22 May 2009
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
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Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: GS
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Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
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Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 6
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: 75 KINGSTON 3789
Retention: 0
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Content Flags:
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Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review Media Identifier:
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
SAS ID: 2999164
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: AMEMBASSY KINGSTON SECURITY ASSESSMENT
TAGS: ASEC, JM
To: STATE
Type: TE
vdkgvwkey: odhc://SAS/SAS.dbo.SAS_Docs/5c8a61b2-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Review Markings:
Margaret P. Grafeld
Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
22 May 2009
Markings: Margaret P. Grafeld Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 22 May 2009